

Message Text

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ACTION IO-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 ACDA-10 AF-06 ARA-10 EA-09

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 AS-01

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7894

INFO USMISSION USUN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SHUM, UN

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OPENING US STATEMENT

1. TEXT FOLLOWS IS THE STATEMENT BY LEONARD GARMENT, US
REP IN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION. STATEMENT WILL BE
RELEASED FEB 3. BEGIN TEXT.

MR. CHAIRMAN,

THE UNITED STATES DELEGATION BELIEVES IT APPROPRIATE
TO TAKE THIS EARLY OCCASION TO OUTLINE THE ATTITUDE OF OUR
GOVERNMENT TOWARD THE WORK OF THE THIRTY-SECOND SESSION OF
THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION AS REFLECTED IN THE PROVISIONAL
AGENDA.

OUR ATTITUDE IS A POSITIVE ONE BASED ON RESPECT FOR OUR
COLLEAGUES AND A GENUINE DESIRE TO WORK COOPERATIVELY AND
EFFECTIVELY WITH THEM. AND IT IS CERTAINLY A HOPEFUL
ATTITUDE.

BUT AS A NEWCOMER TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, I
BELIEVE I CAN BEST CONTRIBUTE TO OUR WORK AT THIS POINT BY
SPEAKING FRANKLY AND OUT OF A FRAMEWORK OF PERCEPTIONS WHICH
IS COMMON TO PERSONS WHO ARE SYMPATHETIC TO THE OBJECTIVES
OF THE COMMISSION WITHOUT BEING FAMILIAR WITH THE DETAILS

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OF ITS WORK. THOSE PERCEPTIONS ARE MARKED BY QUESTIONS AS

TO THE EFFICACY AND IMPARTIALITY OF THE COMMISSION, QUESTIONS AS TO ITS WILLINGNESS TO ACT AND TO ACT IN UNIVERSAL RATHER THAN IN REPETITIOUS BY NARROW TERMS.

NOW LET ME BE QUITE SPECIFIC.

THE DRAFT AGENDA IS A CHALLENGE THAT TRANSCENDS THIS THIRTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION. FOR THE MOST PART IT CONTAINS THE UNFINISHED WORK OF OTHER YEARS, WORK ON SUBJECTS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE THAT, TIME AND AGAIN, HAS BEEN FRUSTRATED, AVOIDED, OR POSTPONED. THESE SEPARATE ITEMS SPEAK IN URGENT TONES OF HUMAN NEEDS THAT THIS COMMISSION WILL NOT IGNORE. COLLECTIVELY, HOWEVER, THE AGENDA POSES A MUCH LARGER QUESTION AND THAT IS WHETHER THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION CAN SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE THE ACTUAL CONDITION OF INDIVIDUALS NOW DEPRIVED OF EVEN SUCH ELEMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS AS SECURITY OF PERSON FROM TORTURE AND ARBITRARY IMPRISONMENT, FREEDOM OF BELIEF AND EXPRESSION, AND EQUALITY OF TREATMENT WITHOUT REGARD TO RACE OR RELIGION.

THE COMPREHENSIVE AGENDA BEFORE US INVENTORIES THE TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THIS SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION. THROUGHOUT THIRTY-ONE PRIOR SESSIONS, MUCH IF NOT A MAJORITY OF THE COMMISSION'S TIME HAS BEEN USED PRIMARILY TO WRITE THOSE DOCUMENTS THAT CONTAIN WHAT- EVER AGREED STANDARDS THERE ARE ON THE RIGHTS OF MAN. THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND SUBSEQUENT INSTRUMENTS HAVE BEEN, AND CONTINUE TO BE, THE STARTING POINT FOR THE WORK OF THIS COMMISSION. THE PREREQUISITE FOR PRESERVING THIS HERITAGE IS AN INSISTENT CONCERN FOR LANGUAGE. CONCEPTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS ARE FRAGILE. THEY MUST BE HANDLED WITH PRECISION. THE WORDS WE USE CAN PRESERVE AND EXPAND THESE CONCEPTS. BUT WORDS CAN ALSO BE USED TO DISTORT, TO DISCREDIT, AND FINALLY TO DESTROY THEM. ONCE DISTORTED THE LANGUAGE OF HUMAN RIGHTS LOSES ITS MORAL AUTHORITY WHICH IS ITS ONLY REAL WEAPON AGAINST THE COERCIVE POWER OF ORGANIZED OPPRESSION. THE PRIMARY MANDATE OF THE COMMISSION IS THEREFORE TO DEFEND THE LANGUAGE OF THE DECLARATION FROM DISTORTION AND DISCREDIT.

OUR AGENDA ALSO CONTAINS SPECIFIC CHALLENGES THAT GO BEYOND THE ELEMENTAL TASK OF PROCLAIMING HUMAN RIGHTS. EACH DAY INDIVIDUALS ARE DEPRIVED OF BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS UNDER CONDITIONS OF UNSPEAKABLE CRUELTY. EACH YEAR TENS OF THOUSANDS

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OF COMMUNICATIONS REACH THE UNITED NATIONS APPEALING FOR RELIEF AND REDRESS OF THESE GRIEVANCES. INACTION MAY HAVE BEEN EXCUSABLE IN EARLIER YEARS WHEN THIS COMMISSION HAD NOT YET DEVELOPED STANDARDS TO EVALUATE THE COMMUNICATIONS OR PROCEDURES FOR THEIR IMPARTIAL EXAMINATION.

THESE JUSTIFICATIONS ARE NO LONGER AVAILABLE FOR POSTPONING SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS OF WELL-DOCUMENTED COMPLAINTS OF GROSS AND SYSTEMATIC VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS. INDEED,

THE COMMISSION WILL PLACE ITSELF IN JEOPARDY OF LOSING ALL RELEVANCE TO THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IF IT FAILS TO EXAMINE AND ACT UPON ALL SUCH VIOLATIONS UNIVERSALLY AND ENERGETICALLY.

THE UNITED STATES COMES TO THIS MEETING READY TO DEAL WITH THE ISSUES ON THE COMMISSION'S AGENDA. WE WANT TO REINFORCE AND EXPAND THE UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE OF HUMAN RIGHTS. WE WANT TO DO SO BY TAKING ACTION ON A WIDER RANGE OF SUBJECTS AND RESPONDENTS. AND WE WANT TO REACH EARLY AGREEMENT ON HOW BEST TO CONCENTRATE OUR EFFORTS.

LET ME SPEAK OF ONE AREA WHERE SUCH CONCENTRATION IS ESSENTIAL. A FAILURE TO COMPLETE DRAFTING A DECLARATION ON RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE WOULD CONSTITUTE A SCANDAL OF MONUMENTAL PROPORTIONS, RAISING THE QUESTION OF HOW SERIOUSLY WE ARE COMMITTED TO ALL ASPECTS OF CRITICAL HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES, NOT MERELY THOSE WHICH SERVE THE INTERESTS OR SATISFY THE AIMS OF DISPARATE VOTING COALITIONS.

WE ARE AWARE OF THE MANY PROBLEMS THAT MUST BE SOLVED IN ORDER TO ACCOMMODATE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON ISSUES RELATING TO RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE. NO ONE WILL DENY THEIR NUMBER OR COMPLEXITY. BUT NO ONE CAN BLINK THE PRESSING AND THREATENING NATURE OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION.

THE CENTRALITY OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY TO THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES OF DETENTE AND PEACE HAS BEEN ACCORDED RECOGNITION BY A MAJOR CONTEMPORARY DOCUMENT -- THE HELSINKI DECLARATION -- WHICH, INCIDENTALLY, WAS THE PRODUCT, REACHED BY CONSENSUS, OF DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES AND VALUE SYSTEMS. ONE OF THE TEN GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE DECLARATION -- PRINCIPLE VII "" SPECIFIES THAT THE 35 PARTICIPATING STATES WILL RESPECT "THE FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, CONSCIENCE, RELIGION OR BELIEF, FOR ALL" AND ASSURE "THE FREEDOM OF THE INDIVIDUAL TO PROFESS AND PRACTICE, ALONE OR IN A COMMUNITY WITH OTHER,

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RELIGION OR BELIEF ACTING IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DICTATES OF HIS OWN CONSCIENCE."

A SENSE OF TRANSCENDENT CONCERN AND URGENCY IN THIS BODY IS INDISPENSABLE IF WE ARE TO IMPLEMENT MEANINGFULLY

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ACTION IO-11

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THE DECISION REACHED AT OUR LAST SESSION -- AND NOW REINFORCED BY HELSINKI -- THAT A DECLARATION ON RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE BY ACCORDED PRIORITY. IT MEANS DEVOTING AS MANY SESSIONS AS REQUIRED TO BRING THE DRAFT DECLARATION TO COMPLETION. IF A WORKING GROUP -- SIMILAR TO LAST YEAR'S -- IS ESSENTIAL TO THE PROCESS, IT MEANS ALLOCATING TO THE WORKING GROUP SPECIFIED TIME PERIODS WITH A PRECISE TIMETABLE TO REACH AGREEMENT AND CONCLUDE ITS DELIBERATIONS.

ALTHOUGH SEQUESTERED IN THIS ROOM, WE DO NOT ACT IN ISOLATION. THE OUTSIDE WORLD, AFFLICTED BY ACTS OF CONTINUED AND SYSTEMATIC OPPRESSION, BY AFFRONTS TO THE DIGNITY AND DECENT LIFE OF COUNTLESS HUMAN BEINGS, WAITS FOR A SIGNAL THAT THERE IS REAL HOPE FOR COLLECTIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE ACTION TO PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS.

IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS WHAT IS AT ISSUE IS NOTHING LESS THAN THE UTILITY AND LEGITIMACY OF THIS COMMISSION. IT IS A FACT, NOT TO BE DENIED OR BLURRED: DOUBTS NOT ONLY EXIST BUT MULTIPLY THAT THE COMMISSION CAN DEAL WITH HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS FORCEFULLY AND UNIVERSALLY. WE MUST REJECT THE TEMPTATION TO SUBMIT TO ONE POLITICAL BIAS OR ANOTHER IN EXPRESSING OUR CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, ALLOWING UNIVERSAL STANDARDS TO BE SUBVERTED TO THE FUNCTION OF SUPPORTING A SELECTIVE MORALITY. IF WE CARE ONLY ABOUT SOME HUMAN RIGHTS

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VIOLATIONS IN SOME COUNTRIES, THEN WE DO NOT CARE ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS ANYWHERE. THE WAY THIS COMMISSION ADDRESSES THE QUESTION OF TORTURE AND THE ISSUE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS IS A CENTRAL TEST OF SELECTIVE MORALITY. THE UNITED STATES DELEGATION IS DETERMINED TO KEEP THESE ISSUES

BEFORE THE COMMISSION.

THERE ARE FIVE SHORT WEEKS IN WHICH TO DISPEL THESE
DOUBTS. THE UNITED STATES DELEGATION FOR ONE COMES HERE
TO AFFIRM BY ACTION THE CONTINUING RELEVANCE AND LEGITIMACY
OF THIS COMMISSION. MAY THIS SESSION PROVE US RIGHT.

END TEXT.

2. FOR USUN: US REP GARMENT ASKS USUN TO PASS TEXT TO
KITTY TELSCH AND MIKE BERLIN.DALE

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